

Agricultural Marketing Service, Poultry Programs
Approved Laboratory Program for Testing Frozen Cooked Diced Chicken

Background:

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Poultry Programs, purchases Frozen Cooked Diced Chicken for distribution in the National School Lunch program and other Federal Food Assistance programs. Frozen Cooked Diced Chicken is purchased through competitive bids or negotiated contracts. Due to the nature of the product, the purchase specifications have strict microbial requirements for standard plate count, coliform, generic *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), Coagulase-positive *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*), *Salmonella*, and *Listeria monocytogenes*. *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes* are tested on the basis of presence-only, and the other microbes are tested on the basis of established quantification levels for each microbe.

To verify compliance with the specification requirements, samples of the product are collected after production and submitted for laboratory analyses at approved laboratories. Historically, these laboratories included one Federal laboratory and two State laboratories. These laboratories are identified in the commodity purchase specification document that is located on the internet at: www.ams.usda.gov/poultry/cp/chicken/chkn_specific.htm. For fiscal year 2005, the total number of samples submitted for laboratory analyses was 8,159.

In response to requests by suppliers of frozen cooked diced chicken, AMS Poultry Programs agreed to expand the list of approved laboratories to include commercial laboratories. The commercial laboratories must meet the requirements specified in the AMS Approved Laboratory Program for Testing Frozen Cooked Diced Chicken. Interested parties (Commercial Laboratories) are invited to apply to be considered under this program if they meet the general requirements listed below.

General Requirements:

1. Laboratories shall be a third party independent laboratory and not owned by companies, or have financial and/or other business association with any company, that are or may be involved in poultry and egg products procurement contracts with AMS.
2. The laboratory must be an established business and have experience in performing the following tests using AOAC - International, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and/or Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) methods: Coliforms, Standard Plate Count, Coagulase positive *S. aureus*, generic *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Listeria monocytogenes* through confirmation.
3. The laboratory must be supervised by a person with a degree in microbiology, biology, chemistry, food science/technology, medical technology or other related science, and must have at least 12 semester hours of coursework in microbiology or at least 4 years of analytical work experience in a food microbiology laboratory.

4. The laboratory must follow Laboratory Quality Assurance Procedures equivalent to those specified in chapter 1 of the Compendium of Methods for the Microbiological Examination of Foods, 4th edition, Editors: Downes and Ito, published by the American Public Health Association.
5. The laboratory should follow good laboratory practices and provide a safe working environment for its employees as promulgated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
6. The laboratory must have written standard operating procedures on the required methods and their quality assurance activities.
7. The laboratory must permit any duly authorized representative of the Secretary of Agriculture to perform either announced or unannounced on-site laboratory reviews of facilities and records during normal business hours. In addition, the laboratory must successfully pass an on-site review demonstrating that the laboratory's facilities and equipment are adequate for performing designated analyses of Frozen Cooked Diced Chicken and proficiency in the specified analyses before approval.
8. The laboratory must have an appropriate system for documentation of sample receipt, sample analyses, analytical report generation, record keeping, and billing. The laboratory must be able to provide such documents for inspection or review.
9. The laboratory must be willing to participate in a proficiency sample program without any charge to AMS.
10. The laboratory must agree to report to AMS designated personnel, any change in the laboratory's ownership, officers, directors, supervisory personnel, or other responsible individual or entity.
11. The laboratory must have the necessary equipment and resources to report results electronically.
12. The laboratory must adhere to the same level of integrity as exhibited by the Federal and State laboratories. The approval status will be revoked if it is determined that the laboratory or any responsible agent or employee of the laboratory has falsified or altered analytical results or substituted an analytical result from another laboratory for its own.
13. The laboratory will be required to pay the fee covering expenses incurred by the Government to determine its qualifications to participate in the program regardless of whether or not it is approved for the program.